Perspectives on English Language Instruction Techniques:

Lessons from Latin American Bilingual Programs

by
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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this project to the people who made me who I am today. To my parents, thank you for your continued support and guidance over the course of this project. To my grandparents, thank you for your encouragement and prayers for my career and for this project. To my grandmother Peggye and to my father, thank you for your invaluable advice and countless phone calls to discuss and edit. Finally, to my mom and Peggye, thank you for your dedication to the field of education. Your passion for teaching and your devotion to your students is what inspired me to follow in your footsteps.

Abstract

This paper reviews current research about programs available for English language learning (ELL) students in the United States. It discusses what programs are best for language acquisition according to research and how to most effectively teach English to ELL students, specifically Spanish-speaking students. It tells the importance of implementing effective English instruction techniques due to the growing number of Spanish-speaking students in the United States. The paper analyzes information gathered from interviews with educators who have experience at bilingual schools in Latin America. Bilingual schools in Latin America provide English education in an environment consistent with evidence-based methods of language instruction. The paper examines common themes that appeared in the interviews and suggests curriculum implications from the findings. The paper provides suggestions for parents, teachers, and administrators seeking information about language acquisition.

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Introduction

The Problem

The Hispanic population is the fastest growing population in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Due to the influx of Spanish speakers, the number of emergent bilinguals in the education system is likewise rapidly increasing. From 2001 to 2011, the number of Hispanic students has gone from 8.2 million to 11.8 million, increasing its percentage of enrollment from 17% to 24% (NCES, 2014).

The school system in the United States must be well equipped to teach English to this growing group of emergent bilingual students so that they have an equal opportunity to receive an appropriate education (Gándara, 2010; Morales & Aldana, 2010). However, the education system in the United States may not be educating emergent bilinguals by effective researched based methods of instruction (García & Kleifgen, 2010). If this group of students is not taught English effectively, they will fall behind academically (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

Research Question

Are there methods of English instruction used in Latin American elementary schools that can be applied to effectively educate Spanish-speaking students in the United States?

Terms

LEP – Limited English Proficient

ELL – English Language Learner

EL – English Learner

ESL – English as a Second Language

Design of the Study

There may be instructional techniques used in Latin American elementary schools that can be applied in the United States to help Spanish-speaking students learn English more effectively. Research indicates that language acquisition occurs best when both a student's native language and English are used throughout the day (Cummins, 2000; García & Kleifgen, 2010; Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004; Palmer, & Martínez, 2013). However, this is not the most common form of instruction for Spanish-speaking students in the United States today (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

There are many resources and programs to help train educators with evidence-based practices to instruct English language learners ("Programs for English Language Learners"). Researchers have studied schools and programs in the United States, but little research exists about what instructional techniques are used to teach English in Latin America.

Students who learn English in their native countries in Latin America are being educated in the best environment for language acquisition, according to research (Palmer & Martínez, 2013). Therefore, these children are most effectively acquiring a new language and reaping all educational benefits of bilingualism. It is possible that the

answer to questions about education for emergent bilingual students in the United States may be found in Latin American bilingual schools.

This qualitative research study was conducted through interviews with educators in schools in both Latin America and the United States. Interviews offer findings about the instruction methods in the schools and were compared to identify emerging patterns and similarities. Comparing the results with current research-based language instruction techniques may reveal additional insight into additional instructional methods that benefit English language learners. The findings are informed by observations, review of related literature, and perspectives of experienced practitioners in the field of education.

Methodology

The idea and foundation for this project formed during my time as an intern at an orphanage in Zamorano, Honduras. Over the course of my internship I was able to observe students at the local bilingual school and their advanced English language skills despite not having opportunities to speak English outside of school. The observations I made led me to begin inquiring about English language instruction techniques. The connections I established during my time as an intern helped me come in contact with the interviewees who I would consult for this project.

Interviews

- *Interviewee A (IA)*: Fifth grade teacher at the Alison-Bixby Stone Bilingual School in Zamorano, Honduras

- *Interviewee B (IB)*: Second grade teacher in rural village of Honduras, current Spanish teacher in Nashville, TN
- *Interviewee C (IC)*: Second grade teacher at Colegio El Camino Academy in Bogotá, Colombia
- *Interviewee D (ID):* Former director of San Augustin Language Institute in Trujillo, Peru

Interview Questions

1. Do you use a particular method of language instruction in your classroom? Please explain.
2. Do you believe there are forms of instruction that are specifically suited for the education of English language learners (ELL)? Please explain.
3. What methods of classroom instruction do you most commonly use?
4. What is your general perception of student success in acquiring foreign language skills?
5. How do you incorporate students' native cultures into your instruction?
6. How much time do you spend on English language instruction each day? Do you think this time is sufficient? Please explain.
7. What form of assessment do you use to measure progress?

Literature Review

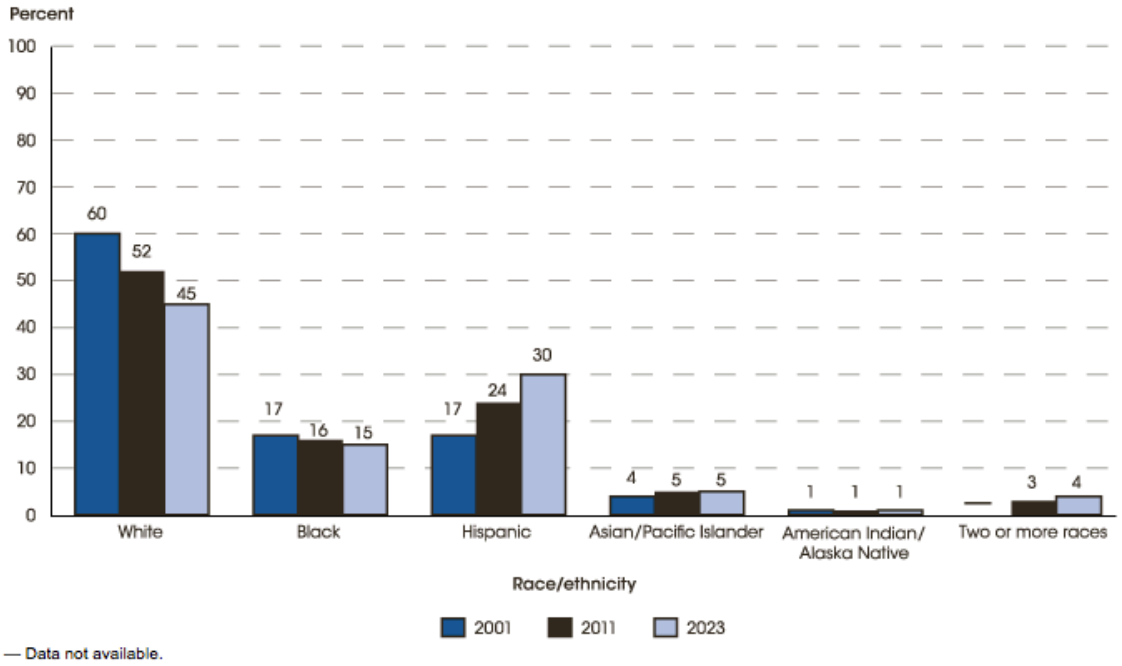
Statistics about Hispanic Student Enrollment

As shown in Table 1, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that the number of White students enrolled in public schools in the United States has decreased from 28.7 million to 25.6 million from 2001 to 2011. This change caused the total enrollment of White students to drop eight percent from 60% to 52% in 10 years. During the same time, the number of Hispanic students has gone from 8.2 million to 11.8 million, increasing its percentage of enrollment from 17% to 24% (NCES, 2014). Since 2002, there has been a greater percentage of Hispanic students represented in public schools than African American students (NCES, 2014).

Looking ahead to 2023, the number of White students enrolled in the public school system is projected to decrease to 23.5 million, lowering the percentage to 45%. In contrast, the number of Hispanic students is projected to increase to 15.6 million by 2023, representing 30% of total enrollment (NCES, 2014). These statistics show only a 15% difference between what has historically been the majority race represented in United States public schools and a minority race in the nation. It should be noted that the statistics concerning Hispanic enrollment do not differentiate between students who use Spanish as their first language and students who already have fluent English skills or use English as their first language. Nonetheless, statistics confirm that Hispanic presence in the public school system proves to be the future of the education demographic in the United States (NCES, 2014).

Table 1

Race/Ethnicity of U.S. public school student enrollment (Pre-K-12th grade)



Note. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Prior to 2008, separate data on students of two or more races were not collected. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Data for 2023 are projected. Adapted from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary and Secondary Education," 2001–02 and 2011–12. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2013*, table 203.50.

Patricia Gándara, a highly published researcher on the Hispanic population in the school system summarized her opinion in her article "The Latino Education Crisis" (2010) published in *Educational Leadership*. She asked her readers: "They're the fastest-growing ethnic group but the most poorly educated. Do we have what it takes to close the gap?" (Gándara, 2010, p. 24). According to Gándara (2010), "This fact has enormous consequences for the United States, as the job market continues to demand more education and Latinos continue to make up a larger an increasingly larger portion of the workforce" (p. 24). She stated that it is the responsibility of the public school system to effectively educate the future generations of America. Gándara (2010) wrote that it is in

society's best interest to work to close the achievement gap for Spanish-speaking students in the United States (Gándara, 2010).

Terminology

The terminology to describe these students has changed throughout the years, as often happens in the field of education. The term *Limited English proficient* (LEP) has typically been used for the past 40 years (Palmer & Martínez, 2013). However, today researchers and educators tend to favor the phrase *English language learner* (ELL) or *English learner* (EL). Palmer & Martínez (2013) also used the term *bilingual* or *emergent bilingual* to describe children who engage in at least two languages in their home and/or school. It is the researchers' belief that the use of this specific terminology reflects a shift in perspective towards the growth of Spanish-speaking students in schools. Emergent bilingual students are not limited because of their lack in English skills; instead, they are new learners of the English language and have their own set of language skills to contribute to their community. Furthermore, referring to these students as emergent bilinguals highlights the cognitive potential that these students can have access to if their dual-language skills are effectively nurtured in school (Palmer & Martínez, 2013).

García and Kleifgen (2010) described what happens to English language learners when they are enrolled in a new school. First, a home language survey is given about what language is used in the home by caregivers, parents, and siblings. A study by Kindler (2002) found that about 80% of schools use some kind of home language survey for new ELL students (as cited in García & Kleifgen, 2010). Next, students are given a language proficiency assessment that usually measures listening comprehension and

speaking skills for K-2 and reading and writing for grades three and higher. According to Kindler (2002) the most common types of tests used are language proficiency tests such as the Language Assessment Scales (LAS), IDEA Language Proficiency Tests (IPT), and Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey or achievement tests including the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 9), Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), or personal school district tests (as cited in García & Kleifgen, 2010). Schools also use informal teacher assessment and previous school achievement to classify English language learners (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

The statistics are clear, Spanish-speaking students are a growing population in the public education system in the United States (NCES, 2014). The next question researchers discuss is the type of programs that are available for these students once they are enrolled in school and classified as an English language learner.

Types of Programs

Programs to support English language learners in the United States have been around for several decades ("Programs for English Language Learners"). However, the effectiveness of these programs has been researched and debated since their conception. García and Kleifgen (2010) summarized the programs most commonly used in the United States and discuss their effectiveness for ELL students. Historically, English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in the United States have applied English-emphasis instruction practices. In contrast, a more modern approach takes a bilingual perspective to English language acquisition for students (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

English-emphasis programs. First, submersion or sink or swim programs provide the same education for Spanish-speaking students that monolingual English

students receive. This was the most widely used method before 1970 but has reappeared with a push for English-only initiatives in some areas. In ESL pullout or ESL push-in programs, students receive some support outside of the regular classroom and the ESL teacher works collaboratively with the general education teacher to provide support to emerging multilingual students. Another program known by several names: structured English immersion, sheltered English, or content-based ESL provides pedagogical support and scaffolding in only English instruction. In transitional bilingual education or early exit bilingual education, the student's home language is used if possible but the goal is to have students acquire English as quickly as possible so that they can be placed in the general education classroom with minimal support (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

The bilingual approach. In contrast to English concentrated programs, several programs take a more bilingual instruction approach. Developmental bilingual education or late exit bilingual education programs provide instruction in both English and students' home language. Two-way bilingual education, also called two-way dual language, two-way immersion, dual immersion, or dual language programs support fluency in two languages, most commonly English and Spanish. In this program, all students are instructed in two languages and acquire bilingual skills (García & Kleifgen, 2010). More recently, a new program has emerged called dynamic bi/plurilingualism. In this approach, students are taught to use hybrid language practices that incorporate their home language even if academic instruction occurs mostly in English. Students work collaboratively with other students who speak their same language or are supplied with written materials in their own language. Dynamic bi/plurilingualism is a newer approach that is most often implemented at the high school level (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

Amount of English instruction. As shown in Table 2, these programs apply a wide range of the amount of English use during instruction. Submersion programs are 100% English. ESL pull out and push-in programs, as well as structured immersion programs use 90-100% English. Transitional bilingual education programs start from 90-50% instruction in students' home language, and decrease to 10% or less. All developmental bilingual, two-way bilingual, and bi/plurilingual education programs generally follow a 50/50 or 90/10 model. In other words, they consist of either half instructional time in English and half in students' home language, or they only use English for 10% of instructional time, respectively (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

English language programs have developed and changed through the years; however, enough time has passed for researchers to investigate and study the effectiveness of each program. Looking at the empirical evidence and research of each type of instruction will help determine what is most effective in educating English language learners.

Table 2

ESL Programs and Percent of Time Spent in English Instruction

Program Type	**English Instruction Time (%)**
Submersion or sink or swim program	100%
ESL pullout or ESL push-in	90-100%
Structured English immersion, Sheltered English, or Content-based ESL	90-100%
Transitional bilingual education or Early exit bilingual education	10%, increasing to 90%
Developmental bilingual education or Late exit bilingual education	10-50%
Two-way bilingual education, Two-way dual language, Two-way immersion, Dual immersion, or Dual language	10-50%
Dynamic bi/plurilingualism	10-50%

Language Acquisition

As early as the 1970s, educational researcher Jim Cummins concluded that language and knowledge are best acquired using both a student's native language and the new language, a concept Cummins called "linguistic interdependence" (García & Kleifgen, 2010). Cummins (2000) described the interdependence principle: "To the extent that instruction in Lx [one language] is effective in promoting proficiency in Lx [that language], transfer of this proficiency to Ly [the additional language] will occur provided there is adequate exposure to Ly" (Cummins, 2000, p. 38). For Spanish-

speaking students learning English, this means that the use of English is effective in promoting proficiency in English, provided that the student is using Spanish during language acquisition. Cummins (2000) summarized his belief in this principle: "…instructional time can be focused on developing students' literacy skills in their primary language without adverse effects of the development of their literacy skills in English" (p. 39).

Genesee, Paradis, and Crago (2004) referred to Jim Cummins' "language proficiency framework" to explain linguistic challenges for Spanish-speaking students, specifically in English only classrooms. As shown in Figure 1, Cummins' (2000) framework consists of a horizontal continuum ranging from context-embedded communication to context-reduced communication that crosses a vertical continuum ranging from cognitively demanding communication to cognitively undemanding communication (Cummins, 2000).

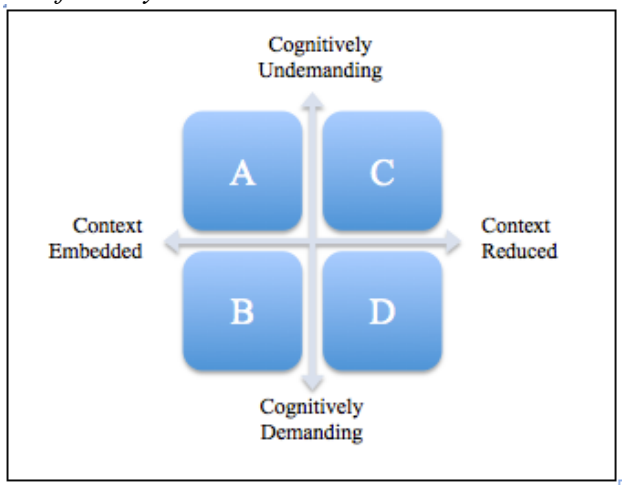
Context communication has to do with how much of the context of a conversation the participants can relate to. In context-reduced communication, more language must be used to better acquaint one or more participants with the subject matter. Context-embedded conversations have more to do with day-to-day social language use (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004). On the vertical continuum, cognitively demanding communication involves the use of complex language skills that are not often used while cognitively undemanding communication involves the use of overlearned language skills that do not require as much cognitive participation (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004). The continuums form four quadrants that Cummins labeled A, B, C, and D. Cummins (2000) argued that communication that occurs in Quadrant A between context-embedded

and cognitively undemanding communication occurs easily for English language learners. However, moving diagonally across the diagram, ELL students struggle more communicating within Quadrant D, the "mastery of the academic functions of language" (Cummins, 2000, p. 68).

Cummins (2000) used this framework to explain the gap in effective communication for social versus academic purposes for English language learners. Students may quickly acquire Quadrant A language skills within 1-2 years of exposure to a new language. However, acquiring context-reduced and cognitively demanding communication skills for more academic purposes will take more time and careful instruction (Cummins, 2000; Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004). Cummins (2000) writes, "optimal instruction for linguistic, cognitive and academic growth will tend to move from Quadrant A, to B, and from Quadrant B to D" (p. 71). Students will move from interacting best in a context embedded and cognitively undemanding environment to a context reduced and cognitively demanding environment with appropriate instruction (Cummins, 2000).

Figure 1

Cummins' Language Proficiency Framework



Note. Adapted from Genesee, F., Paradis, J., & Crago, M., (2004). *Dual language development and disorders*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes

Successful Programs

Cummins (2000) found that English-emphasis programs do not align with his research on language acquisition (Cummins, 2000). García and Kleifgen (2010) compiled empirical evidence that supports this notion. They specifically discussed studies by Ramírez (1992) and Thomas and Collier (1997) that encourage the use of students' home language in instruction. Ramírez (1992) studied 554 Hispanic students ranging in age from Kindergarten to sixth grade. These students were enrolled in English-only structured immersion programs, transitional early exit programs, and late-exit developmental bilingual programs. Ramírez (1992) found that students educated in the late-exit developmental bilingual programs performed better than the students in programs using more English instruction. The differences in the students' performances in this study appeared later, in sixth grade, suggesting that long-term academic benefits

are produced from dual-lingual language instruction (as cited in García & Kleifgen, 2010).

Thomas and Collier (1997) found that two-way bilingual education programs at the elementary school level are more successful due to the use of students' first language. Several years later, Thomas and Collier (2002) more specifically researched the 50:50 and 90:10 two-way bilingual education programs. They found that the 90:10 model was the most efficient program they studied and concluded that "the strongest predictor of English language achievement was the amount of formal schooling the students received in the home language" (as cited in García & Kleifgen, 2010, p. 48). Based on these studies, developmental bilingual, two-way bilingual, and bi/plurilingual programs that continuously incorporate students' native languages provide the most instructional support and long term cognitive benefits for students.

García and Kleifgen (2010) summarized their conclusions about the previous research on language education programs: "What is evident from the research is that the use of the student's home language is crucial for their long-term cognitive growth and academic achievement in English" (p. 50). Genesee, Paradis, and Crago (2004) went a step further and concluded that, for English language learners, acquiring English is essential for social integration and ultimately for economic prosperity in their community (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004). They concluded that students speaking a language other than English face three main challenges: acquiring English for academic purposes, integrating socially with their peers, and learning new cognitive knowledge. Students must simultaneously acquire new language skills while trying to "bridge the cultural and socioeconomic differences between their homes and the school" (Genesee, Paradis, &

Crago, 2004, p. 185). In a second concluding statement, Genesee, Paradis, and Crago (2004) concluded that students who are educated in bilingual programs with the majority of instruction in a student's native language develop equal or higher levels of proficiency both in language and academics. In comparison, they argued that other English-emphasis programs do not promote competence in a student's native language; therefore, no positive benefits can be transferred from the native language to the new language being acquired (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004).

Morales and Aldana (2010) discussed the viability of language programs by comparing each program's ultimate goal for English language learners. For example, in early exit and transitional bilingual education programs, the goal is to quickly transition students into mainstream English-only classrooms (Morales & Aldana, 2010). As with García and Kleifgen (2010), Morales and Aldana (2010) argued that bilingual programs are the best option to educate English language learners in the United States. They mentioned academic benefits of these programs as well as social and cultural benefits for children: "Interethnic and interracial interactions are an integral part of business and economic relations; thus, learning how to negotiate multicultural settings is an important skill that can benefit students throughout their academic and professional lives" (Morales & Aldana, 2010, p. 165). If children are educated in more bilingual settings, especially with Spanish-speaking students in schools, they will be more prepared to interact in the multicultural setting that makes up the United States (Morales & Aldana, 2010).

Genesee, Paradis, & Crago (2004) defended the use of bilingual programs and promote the idea that temporary delays in language acquisition are offset by later gains for students who are being educated bilingually. They also concluded that English-only

instruction not only impedes English acquisition, but also cognitive benefits that stem from bilingual language development (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004). Gándara (2010) supported dual-language and two-way immersion programs that promote both English and Spanish for all students, producing fully bilingual students who are able to use both languages in their daily lives.

García and Kleifgen (2010) concluded that students in the United States are not being educated with what research has shown is most effective and beneficial for the student. Research shows that the incorporation of a student's home language in instruction not only supports English acquisition, but also dynamic bilingualism (García & Kleifgen, 2010). Despite the research, García and Kleifgen (2010) determined that English-only instruction is far too common. They wrote, "Given the backlash against bilingual education and the push for English-only instruction in the United States, this decrease in the use of students' home languages in their education might not surprise us" (García & Kleifgen, 2010, p. 55).

Curriculum Implications

As early as 1995, Collier (1995) had proposed four factors for successful education of emergent bilinguals: a socioculturally supportive environment, the development of the students' home languages to a high cognitive level, uninterrupted cognitive development, which best occurs through education in the home language, and teaching the additional language with cognitively complex tasks (as cited in García & Kleifgen, 2010). More recently, researchers have made additional suggestions for educators and administrators to apply effective instruction techniques for ELL students based on their research.

Continuum of support. Gándara (2010) argued that factors including teacher quality, school facilities and resources, and curriculum can be addressed by schools and can positively influence the education of ELL students (Gándara, 2010). Gándara (2010) wrote that an isolated, single intervention in a school does not impact students enough for long-term benefit. Instead, interventions need to be in place throughout a child's education, forming a continuum of support for this growing population of Spanish-speaking students.

Bilingualism in education for all. García and Kleifgen (2010) supported four effective techniques based on their research and conclusions. First, in support for bilingualism in education for all, García and Kleifgen (2010) concluded: "…all children, regardless of language background, need to develop bi/plurilingual abilities to meet the communicative challenges of the 21st century" (p. 59). García and Kleifgen (2010) considered what the statistics show about the future demographic of the United States, as well as the cognitive benefits that bilingualism has for students. They wrote that rigorous education for bilinguals incorporates students' home languages as much as possible. However, this may be difficult for educators who are not bilingual. García and Kleifgen (2010) encouraged a "bottom up" approach in which educators use students' native languages as a resource in their classroom. This approach not only aids English acquisition for ELL students, but also supplies academic benefits for monolingual English speakers who will hear and learn words in other languages during class (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

Translanguaging. Next, García and Kleifgen (2010) describe translanguaging pedagogies as "all practices that work against the bracketing of English, building instead

English proficiency using the home language as a scaffold" (p. 63). García and Kleifgen (2010) define "bracketing" of English as "a separation of English from instruction in other languages" (p. 54). Bracketing hinders the hybrid nature of bilingualism and the benefits of translanguaging.

Students practice translanguaging by moving between more than one language during their interactions throughout the day. Educators practice translanguaging by incorporating multiple languages into instruction. To apply translanguaging, teachers may encourage students to research, read, and write in their own languages when applicable. Technology is a powerful resource that can give students access to information in both English and another language simultaneously. For assessment, teachers may give students the assessment in English and their home language (García & Kleifgen, 2010). García and Kleifgen (2010) wrote, "Teachers of emergent bilingual students—mainstream, ESL, and bilingual—who understand the potential of translanguaging as a sense-making mechanism have the tools to provide a rigorous education for these students" (p. 46). Teachers who use more than one language in instruction, or simply encourage students to use more than one language during class, are promoting the hybridity of language.

Critical multilingual awareness. Thirdly, critical multilingual awareness programs utilize community and technological resources to educate all students in social, political, and economic dimensions associated with languages across the world (García & Kleifgen, 2010). Parents of English language learners may be guest speakers in the classroom or do "read-alouds" in their child's classroom. The students themselves may

even contribute to multilingual awareness by sharing their own experiences from their childhood, their home, and their community.

Complex language use. Similarly, in their final suggested practice, García and Kleifgen (2010) suggested that teachers promote English academic literacy through complex language use by providing a "challenging curriculum combined with explicit, overt instruction" (p. 67). This approach includes structured scaffolding and instructional support while simultaneously teaching challenging curriculum (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

Literacy engagement. Jim Cummins (2011) argued that literacy engagement helps reduce the achievement gap not only for English language learners but also for all underachieving students in the school system. Cummins (2011) wrote that the more access students have to printed text and are able to engage with the text, the more they will be exposed to academic language. Thus, English language learners specifically will have more opportunities to expand their vocabulary of academic language. Cummins (2011) writes that the best way to do this is to give ELL students ample access to literature in English and in their home language. Students should also be encouraged to write in their home language and English to showcase their multilingualism (Cummins, 2011).

Challenging the norm. Palmer & Martínez (2013) challenged educators to question the accepted norm of monolingualism in America. They challenged educators to take a second look at the assumption that the goal of educating emergent bilinguals is to accommodate them until they achieve English proficiency similar to their monolingual peers (Palmer & Martínez, 2013). Palmer and Martínez (2013) pointed out that educating

emergent bilinguals may not be the norm in the United States, but it is the norm worldwide. They wrote that the challenges that take place for these students are "not in the leaners themselves but in the language ideologies and normative discourses that permeate classrooms, schools, and the surrounding society" (Palmer & Martínez, 2013, p. 273).

Palmer & Martínez (2013) encouraged the use of dual language programs that treat language as a resource and a tool for learning instead of a problem. However, dual language programs can often be criticized for their separation of languages and hindrance of natural acquisition of bilingualism. They defend dual language programs saying that they are a step in the right direction. However, they more adamantly argued for what they call "dynamic bilingualism" (as cited in García & Sylvan, 2011). They wrote, "To work effectively with bilingual learners, we argue, teachers need to develop a robust understanding of bilingualism and of the interactional dynamics of bilingual classroom contexts" (Palmer & Martínez, 2013, p. 269).

Language as practice. Palmer and Martínez (2013) wrote that educators should consider "language as practice" which they contrast with the traditional view of language as a "bounded system of communication" (Palmer & Martínez, 2013, p. 276). With this view, teachers believe language is a social and cultural construct that influences a person. With this shift in perspective on language, the view of monolingualism compared to bilingualism is also altered. Bilingualism is not just "the combination of two separate linguistic systems" (Palmer & Martínez, 2013, p. 277). Instead, bilingualism is dynamic; it is an interaction of two social constructs for language and prepares a person to be more prepared to interact in multilingual environments.

Conclusions

Several decades of studies and research have shown that the best education programs for English language learners are those that take a more hybrid and bilingual approach to language (García & Kleifgen, 2010.) It is up to educators and the school system to implement these conclusions for the benefit of all students in the United States. As the demographic of the American school system continues to change, it will become a greater priority to begin to implement these techniques. More instructional support and resources will be needed to ensure that these changes can be made in schools.

Culture Shock

Classroom teachers should always be aware of their students' past experiences and also what is currently happening in their home lives. In association with language acquisition, culture shock may impact the academic experience for Spanish-speaking students adjusting to a new culture. These students might not be immigrant students, but if their first language is Spanish, their home culture likely imitates the culture of the country that their parents or grandparents are from. These students are prone to experiencing a concept known as culture shock.

The Research

Definition. The earliest definition of culture shock is most commonly cited to Finnish anthropologist Kalervo Oberg in 1954. Oberg (1960) summarized the process of culture shock into four consistent stages. In the first stage, which he called the honeymoon stage, the individual is fascinated with everything new about the culture. He or she is excited to be in a new place. The second stage begins to occur when difficulties arise and the person becomes confused and frustrated with the new culture. A common trigger of this stage is difficulty using the new language that causes conflict in relationships. The individual transitions into the third stage as he or she learns the new language and can communicate more readily with the members of the new culture. Finally, the fourth stage occurs when a person accepts the new culture and can operate within the new culture without experiencing much anxiety (Oberg, 1960). Oberg (1960) wrote about culture, "The culture of any people is the product of history and is built up over time largely through processes which are, as far as the individual is concerned, beyond his awareness" (p. 144). Individuals are molded and affected by culture on a

daily basis, most of the time without noticing the impact. In the same way, the process of adjusting to a new culture has an impact on a person. Oberg (1960) wrote that the most crucial antidote for culture shock is language development (Oberg, 1960).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) referred to the concept of culture shock simply as "transition," and defined transition as, "Whenever a person's position in the ecological environment is altered as a result of change in role, setting or both…" (as cited in Kennedy, Cameron, & Greene, 2012). Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) wrote that there are four main groups of intercultural contact: tourists, sojourners (temporary residents such as international students and international business people), immigrants, and refugees. Children enrolled in elementary school will most likely fall under the immigrant category, but they may also be children of sojourners or refugees.

Approaches. Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) summarized the historical approaches to culture shock. First, the culture learning approach, influenced by the studies of Argyle in 1969 says that adaptation best occurs with "learning new culture-specific culture skills and incorporating those skills into daily life " (as cited in Bochner, 1972, 1986). Another approach is called the stress and coping approach which states that stressful life experiences trigger adjustments and coping to occur. Factors such as relationships, employment, social support, and distance from home may affect how a person will be able to cope with the changes in their new culture. Contemporary theories regarding culture shock are more concerned with the affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of adaptation. Modern theories often attempt to quantify culture shock (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

Response. Cuéllar, Harris, & Jasso (1980) and Hocoy (1996) used the term "acculturation" to describe the process of adapting to a new culture and wrote that acculturation is not as much of a process as it was formerly considered, but it is a state of being. The process of acculturation consists of four stages: cross-cultural transition, stress and skills deficits, responses, and outcomes (as cited in Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Cross-cultural transition begins with a life change, such as moving to a new country, and interacting with the new culture. The stress and skills deficits stage reflects the early theories of the stress and coping approach to culture shock. Individuals will experience stress in a new culture when they become aware of differences in behavior and lack of skills for interacting in the new culture. The responses to these deficits are in three categories: affective, behavioral, and cogitative. Individuals begin to adapt to the changes with their feelings, their behavior, the way they think, and opinions about the new culture. Challenges may appear when elements of the new culture contradict customs from the native culture.

Outcomes. Outcomes based on these changes will be psychological and sociocultural (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Because this process applies for all individuals experiencing a new culture, it also holds true for children in a school that uses a language other than their native language. For these students, they are trying to adapt to a new culture, potentially a new country of residence, as well as adjusting to a new school environment, in a language they are not familiar with. This understanding will impact the way educators and administers consider these students and drive the support that they provide.

Impact on Students

Laura Sterponi (2010) writes that culture impacts a child's learning and language acquisition. For example, the amount of socialization that children experience in a particular culture impacts their language skills at an early age. She writes, "Language use is a form of social action. As such, it is structured by social norms, cultural constructs, beliefs, and ideologies pertaining to language use itself, but also a range of other practices, interpersonal relationships, and individual and group identities" ("Learning Communicative Competence," p. 235-236). The impact of these sociocultural processes determines the rate of language development a child exercises.

Lancy (2010) went on to highlight children's highly adaptable quality. He wrote that children of immigrant and refugee families are especially adaptable and resilient due to their experiences with interacting in a new culture ("Children's Learning in New Settings"). These children often have the responsibility of communicating in a world in which their parents may not be as comfortable communicating. Lancy (2010) summarized a common theme woven throughout the work: "Throughout this work, children's great capacity for learning and their ability to adapt to an enormous range of cultural conditions have been displayed" (p. 447). He wrote that despite children's specific cultural influences, multicultural children are instilled with the ability to adjust to new environments and to adapt quickly.

Kennedy, Cameron, & Greene (2012) described the many emotional effects that occur for students when they are experiencing cultural transition. They may experience role and identity uncertainty, a decreased sense of belonging, feelings of loss of control, feelings of being unvalued, and diffidence regarding their academic and social skills

(Kennedy, Cameron, & Greene, 2012). Regarding these effects, they wrote that a student's gender, ethnicity, and temperament are all predictors of how he or she will adapt to these stressors in his or her life (p. 22). According to Pianta & Kraft-Sayre (2003), "…The child him or herself is predominantly responsible for adapting to the school culture with its formal academic demands and complex social environments…" (as cited in Kennedy, Cameron, & Greene, 2012). They write that what best helps a child adapt to his or her transition are academic skills and social skills.

Variables. While the process of acculturation remains somewhat consistent, there are variables that impact the process. On the individual level, characteristics of the person and the situation will vary- examples include language fluency, training and experience, cultural identity, acculturation strategies, values, reasons for migration, length of cultural contact, amount of intra and intergroup contact, quality of contact, cultural distance, amount of life changes, and social support. On the societal level, the society of origin and the society of settlement will impact the process of acculturation (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

In a school, the most influential variable for acculturating students will be the amount of social support provided. This support may come from administrators and the school environment, the classroom teacher, the classroom environment, and from the parents. Lancy (2010) highlighted the importance of parent and family support for students: "Clearly, the family structure remains important as the foundation for truly successful adaptation. Just as children are able to assist families, so too, families play a critical role in ensuring that children succeed in school" ("Children's Learning in New

Settings," p. 448-449). A collaborative approach to this support system will be the most beneficial for students.

Language Shock

Miller and Endo (2004) focused the concept of culture shock into a phenomenon they refer to as "language shock." They wrote that language shock creates anxiety for students when they cannot understand what is spoken in their classroom. English language learners also become anxious to try to communicate using their native language and worry about being made fun of by their peers. To combat these first effects of language shock, teachers should work to promote both the motivation and self esteem of all students, and paying close attention to the language-learning students (Miller & Endo, 2004).

A second impact of language shock is the adjustment to the curriculum and pedagogy used in American schools. Other countries have unique school culture and traditions that differ from the unique American style (Miller & Endo, 2004). While students are trying to adjust to hearing a new language and living in a new culture, they are also adjusting to the new school culture. Miller and Endo (2004) call these adjustments a "cultural load" for students.

Miller and Endo (2004) suggested many ways to reduce language shock in the classroom. They wrote that educators should start with reducing the cognitive and language load. To reduce the cognitive load, teachers should encourage students to use their prior knowledge and experiences to make sense of information. Teachers can reduce the language load by paying close attention to what the students do and do not understand. They should be careful to define difficult or rare words and break up long

sentences if needed. Another important practice for teachers is to model appropriate language use for their students. This is important for all students but especially the language learners who do not have as much exposure to proper language use, specifically English. Reduction of the cultural load starts with incorporating students' native culture into the curriculum. Even simple routines such as learning to pronounce students' names correctly can help them feel more comfortable in a different culture. Classroom teachers should also evaluate their teaching strategies. They may vary their teaching style for a particular student depending on how he or she responds. Teachers should use clear directions and work to have open communication with each student. Because there are different cultural norms in classrooms of other cultures, teachers should make a point to research and study these differences to either help their student adjust or understand what kind of teaching styles might work best for the student (Miller & Endo, 2004).

Implications for Schools and Teachers

The powerful influence of adults. In order to achieve language proficiency, students need to be continually encouraged and nurtured by the adults in their lives; therefore, a greater emphasis should be placed on a school's preparation and resources to help students adapt to a new culture (Kennedy, Cameron, & Greene, 2012). Mary Borba (2009) summarized her suggestions to schools for supporting English language learners and their families. Her suggestions come from her own experiences as a principal at a school representing many different languages and cultures. She wrote that a very important aspect of support for English language leaners is the involvement of the families. Borba (2009) argued that it is a myth that immigrant parents are less likely to be involved in school activities (Borba, 2009). Schools should try to have bilingual

personnel available, specifically on days that families will need to be at school. She suggested that schools provide English classes for parents. This resource gets the parents involved with the school and helps them feel more comfortable in the school environment. However, this resource also shows students that their parents value education. Borba (2009) wrote that schools should provide books, computer programs, and other resources in the languages of their students.

Valuing the native language and culture. Lancy, Bock, and Gaskins (2010) compiled samples of literature in the field of anthropology that discuss child learning based on cultural influence. A major theme and principle that the editors agreed on states: "[W]hile cultural information is universally transmitted between generations through teaching an learning, there is a wide variation in the specific knowledge to be passed down" (p. 5). The "knowledge" they discussed refers to the cultural expectations and roles that children are expected to fulfill in a particular society. They compiled studies on the differences in what children are expected to do, say, and to learn. While this field is a vast area of study, it is important for classroom teachers to consider when instructing children with different cultural backgrounds.

A technique that Borba (2009) encouraged is the emphasis of the use of students' native languages in their homes. This follows modern research about second language acquisition. She wrote, "Skills developed in the first language are easily transferred to the second language and are crucial for academic success. And when parents and children speak the language they know best, they are working at a higher cognitive level" (p. 683). She encouraged parents to continue speaking their native language at home so that their children continue to hear their native language as well as English. Additionally,

she wrote that parents who are not native English speakers may not be good models of correct use of the English language. Therefore, parents and their children will benefit cognitively from using their native language at home.

Miller and Endo (2004) suggested a similar technique. They want students to embrace their home culture as much as they are adjusting to a new culture. They wrote, "New language learners are likely to be more successful if, instead, they are encouraged to embrace their own culture as they learn the new language" (p. 788). They cited modern research that proves the importance of maintaining the first language when acquiring a new one.

Miller and Endo (2004) suggested that this should be a priority for classroom teachers. Trying to create an accepting classroom environment which values cultural differences will help students continue to use their first language. They wrote, "But if teachers simply demonstrate that they value the presence of students who can speak other languages, these students might not be so quick to abandon their native tongues" (Miller & Endo, 2004, p. 790). Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) concluded, "In societies that genuinely value cultural diversity, it is clearly adaptive to develop and maintain a bicultural, mediating identity. This will give such persons greater social access to the various subgroups that make up these societies…" (p. 273). If teachers are able to create this kind of society in their classroom, English language learners will have greater success, as well as the native English students. Students of different cultures will appreciate one another, a product that will not only benefit students socially, but also academically as every student has the individual ability for success.

Global Education. Raymond Cohen (2001) uniquely defined culture as the realization of "one's own and others' strangeness" (p. 151). He advocated for a state of cross-cultural awareness that encourages discussion of different worldviews and ways of life that he calls "different and equally valid" (p. 151). In regards to education, he wrote, "My basic philosophy for teaching…is that we should help our students to grasp the elementary truth that different societies are programmed by different cultural software. Not better, not worse, just different" (Cohen, 2001, p. 159). This idea corresponds to the concept of Global Education. Global Education is a product of the effects of globalization in the world today. Held and McGrew (2002) wrote that globalization is "the expanding scale, growing magnitude, speeding up and deepening impact of transcontinental flows and patterns of social interaction" (as cited by Camicia & Saavedra, 2009). In the modern world, international societies and culture are more interconnected than ever.

Camicia and Saavedra (2009) argued that more culturally diverse and informative curriculum standards should be included in social studies classes in school (Camicia & Saavedra, 2009). With their suggestions for more diverse cultural education in school, they also imply that transnational students may augment this type of education for all students. They wrote, "…we theorize that the lived experiences of transnational students might provide an avenue for better understanding what new conceptions of citizenship and citizenship education might look like" (Camicia & Saavedra, 2009, p. 503).

Bradbery, et al. (2013) held that students should be taught to interact in a global community because the modern world functions in a global economy. They wrote, "Global Education as concept suffers from a lack of clear understanding of what global

education should be; and then, in a school situation, how to incorporate global perspectives where they are not necessarily explicit in curriculum documents" (Bradbery, et al., 2013, p. 18). Incorporating global perspective in the classroom may seem overwhelming to classroom teachers. However, the article contends that teachers could start with engendering cultural respect in the classroom and developing appreciation for diversity (Bradbery, et al., 2013).

Responsive pedagogy. Eugene García (2001) wrote about responsive pedagogy to the concept of Global Education. His research is concentrated on the education of Spanish-speaking students in an English-speaking environment. García (2001) sought to deconstruct social constructions in the classroom for the benefit of Spanish-speaking students. He wrote, "It might be described as a pedagogy of empowerment, as cultural learning, or as a cultural adaptation of instruction…" (García, 2001, p. 234). With this pedagogy, García (2001) wrote that the role of the instructor must be redefined and educators should understand cultural, cognitive, and social dimensions of learning. To promote this innovative pedagogy, García (2001) wrote that professional development is essential. Ongoing professional development should include training on issues of cultural and linguistic diversity and practices that are most effective with attention to and integration of home culture and practices (García, 2001). He also concluded that educator knowledge of bilingual and bicultural skills may be lacking (García, 2001).

Macqueen, Patrick, and Reynolds (2013) discussed the importance of training pre-service teachers to incorporate Global Education in their classrooms. They wrote that providing students will a global understanding and awareness starts with teacher education and training. They wrote, "Facilitating substantial change in people's attitudes

is never easy…Beliefs which have formed with a person's identity over the course of 18 plus years will not be easily modified (or radically challenged) by a few hours of teaching and learning" (Macqueen, Patrick, & Reynolds, 2013, p. 473). For educators to be able to successfully incorporate elements of global education in their classroom, they must be effectively instructed in the topic.

Macqueen, Patrick, and Reynolds (2013) also suggested simple pedagogy suggestions such as using children's literature, technology, and photographs depicting global issues and other cultures to introduce students to a diverse and global perspective in the classroom. They highlighted the interconnectedness of the world as an incentive for this emphasis in the curriculum: "Living as we do in an age of multimedia and instantly available international communication, our school children are exposed to global issues as never before…" (Macqueen, Patrick, & Reynolds, 2013, p. 471). Incorporating elements of Global Education in the classroom provides a culturally accepting environment that will foster learning for English language learners as well as all other students.

Conclusions

The conclusions gleaned from the existing research also motivate questions for future research. How can we continue to assess how our schools are doing in regard to what research shows is most effective? What additional resources can we provide to educators to help them provide effective instruction for all students and English language learners in their classrooms? Do teachers understand how to support students affected by culture shock in their classrooms? And finally, can we begin to look at bilingual

education in other countries to gather more evidence that can be applied to schools in the United States? The remainder of this paper will attempt to answer these questions.

Research Findings

Interviewees

- *Interviewee A (IA)*: Fifth grade teacher at the Alison-Bixby Stone Bilingual School in Zamorano, Honduras
- *Interviewee B (IB)*: Second grade teacher in rural village of Honduras, current Spanish teacher in Nashville, TN
- *Interviewee C (IC)*: Second grade teacher at Colegio El Camino Academy in Bogotá, Colombia
- *Interviewee D (ID):* Former director of San Augustin Language Institute in Trujillo, Peru

Interviewee A is a teacher at the Alison-Bixby Stone Bilingual School in Zamorano, Honduras. She has taught 5th grade at Alison-Bixby for two years. Before moving to Honduras, IA taught 7th grade math in Houston, Texas for four years, as well as ESL resource class. In Houston, she worked with a student who would not speak at all during the school day. He was nervous and embarrassed to try to speak English. She believed the only reason his grades suffered is because of his lack of English language skills, not because he was behind academically. She paired the student with another student of a similar level of English and worked with them in a small group setting. By the end of the year, they were fluent in English and flourishing in school. IA has a passion for helping students find a love for learning. She says she feels like she has the freedom to be a "real teacher" in her school in Honduras because she is not under as much pressure to achieve certain scores on high stakes standardized tests.

Interviewee B studied Spanish at Harding University. After she graduated she realized she could not speak Spanish conversationally, even after many years of Spanish instruction and majoring in Spanish. After she graduated she taught English for a year in Honduras. In her classroom she had almost no resources and taught 20 second graders

who knew few words of English. She says she achieved major success with these students after a year's time. They went from knowing almost no English, to being able to speak it conversationally with other students in the class. After returning to the states, IB developed her own program to teach Spanish to English speakers seeking to learn a new language. She said she did not want to work in schools and be a part of the cycle of language instruction that does not actually help students learn Spanish. Her program is a style of language instruction based on her experiences teaching English in Honduras.

Interviewee C is a first year teacher at Colegio El Camino Academy in Bogotá, Colombia. She teaches 23 children in her second grade class. 21 are Colombian students and two are from the United States. She has a teacher aid who assists in the classroom all day. She does not speak fluent Spanish but the school has several native Spanish-speaking teachers who teach Spanish and social studies during the school day.

Finally, Interviewee D worked for several years as the director of an English training program for children and adults in Trujillo, Peru. The programs consists of mostly children, ages 12-16 who attend the program outside of their traditional school setting. Since students in Peru typically complete high school at a younger age, some students' families have the resources to send them to additional school after they have finished high school. Several business professionals also attend the school in order to learn English to further their career. ID has lived in several Latin American countries but has now settled in the United States.

The following are common themes that appeared from four interviews with educators in Latin American bilingual schools. Their reports of their methodology, curriculum, and instruction techniques may be a resource for teachers in the United

States. Common threads that appeared throughout the interviews can be analyzed under three main subheadings: bilingualism, classroom instruction, and culture.

Bilingualism

Similarly to the way that American ESL programs vary, time spent on English and Spanish instruction in Latin American bilingual programs vary. Each interview revealed a different style of bilingual instruction ranging from minimal incorporation of the native language to a two-way dual language style of instruction with more time spent in Spanish instruction.

IA incorporates the most Spanish instruction during general classroom education. The program consists of reading and writing instruction for 90 minutes in English and separate reading and writing instruction in Spanish for an additional 90 minutes. The goal for the technique is providing students with extra instruction in reading and writing in both English and Spanish, developing the students' bilingual abilities. What is unique about this program is that the students are practicing these skills for 90 minutes in English, *and* 90 minutes in Spanish. These Spanish-speaking students are developing their English language skills while simultaneously practicing the same language skills in their native language. This type of program would be labeled a two-way dual language, two-way immersion, dual immersion, or dual language program. This type of program has been found to be the most successful for language acquisition (Thomas & Collier, 2002). Because students in this program are developing both languages simultaneously, they are working towards a state of bilingualism. Therefore, according to Morales and Aldana (2010) these students will reap additional benefits such as being able to negotiate

and interact in multicultural settings, both academic and professional (Morales & Aldana, 2010).

IA shares that downside to this approach is that students receive less instruction in math and science. Math and science instruction consists of daily 45-minute blocks and are taught in English. However IA believes the emphasis on English and Spanish language development is a technique that can be applied to ELL students in the states:

> *IA: When students go to the states, they don't have any Spanish instruction. It would be beneficial to teach Spanish as well to new students trying to learn a new language* (IA, personal communication, June 13, 2014).

Comparatively, IB incorporates the least amount of native language instruction in her daily classroom instruction. IB explained that her goal is to spend most instructional time in English producing a mostly immersion style of instruction. However, she said that the most effective general classroom instruction occurs in the presence of strong and consistent classroom management:

> *IB: Classroom management trumps everything, immersion is ideal but not if the students do not understand what is being said or classroom rules* (IB, personal communication, December 17, 2013).

While she sought to do most general classroom instruction in English, she chose to incorporate Spanish into her classroom instruction through classroom management by disciplining and implementing classroom rules and procedures in Spanish.

> *IB: Classroom management is best achieved in the native language* (IB, personal communication, December 17, 2013).

IC shared about the Colombian curriculum and instruction style. At her school, the majority of the instructional time is in English, with several additional classes in

Spanish. The school incorporates Spanish instruction by a native Spanish teacher everyday for 45 minutes. Additionally, the students attend social studies class in Spanish once a week. At her school, the other subjects consist of one hour and 20 or 25 minute blocks. The goal of this school is to transition students fully into English speakers in four years. IC summarizes the instructional goals for students in first and second grade:

> *IC: By first grade it is all in English, support is in Spanish. By second grade everything is in English, their conversations are supposed to be in English.* (IC, personal communication, December 28, 2014).

The development of English skills through the grades builds on the students' prior knowledge. The school has yearly language goals for the students. They work to reach certain benchmarks in the English language by specified times throughout the year. The program most closely simulates a transitional bilingual education or early exit bilingual education program (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

Finally, in many countries, individuals have access to programs solely dedicated to English language instruction. These programs often simulate a school setting but have one goal of English instruction. In this case, all instruction occurs in English. For example, in the Peruvian English program discussed by ID, the students cycle through modules of three and a half week rotations. The program lasts for two and a half years. Students or adults such as business professionals may choose to attend the program. The main goal of the program is fluent English acquisition, and it uses the immersion technique. Teachers are fluent English speakers but bilingual teachers are also helpful because they have an understanding of both languages. These teachers may supplement instruction with Spanish for clarity if needed. Instruction includes grammar, vocabulary, phonetic rules, pronunciation, and conversation practice.

The time spent on English and Spanish instruction in Latin American bilingual schools varies. However, the main goal of each program is to either efficiently teach students English or effectively teach English while simultaneously providing a strong general education.

Classroom Instruction

Type and style of classroom methodology will vary from school to school, just like it does in the United States. However, some teaching strategies may be more cohesive for language acquisition.

In IA's program, English goals are achieved through four main areas: guided reading, independent reading, word-work, and writer's workshop. Guided reading consists of the class reading aloud together. Independent reading consists of students reading books at their reading level quietly to themselves. Independent reading is highly encouraged inside and outside of the classroom and students are required to read for at least 20 minutes during the school day. Word-work incorporates grammar skills and word strategies such as understanding prefixes, suffixes, spelling, and sentence formation. Finally, writer's workshop is a time for students apply what they have learned from class mini-lessons through a piece of writing. Several times throughout the year IA allows students to write on a topic of their choice, in whatever style they choose.

Reading groups depend on teacher preference. IA prefers to start with same level, high and low reading groups at the beginning of the year and transition to mixed level reading groups by the end of the year. She emphasized the importance of facilitating conversation and vocabulary through reading and speaking in the classroom. Students practice reading by partner reading with a partner of their choice. To facilitate fluency,

IA incorporates read-alouds everyday. IA compared benefits of English acquisition in Latin America and the United States:

> *IA: Here the students have the vocabulary of 14 other students, not just one or two in their ESL classrooms* (IA, personal communication, June 13, 2014).

IA uses students to drive instruction because of students' abilities to learn from each other and to build on each other's knowledge and vocabulary. She believes the teacher is the guide and a monitor and students should be given many opportunities to apply and practice what they have learned as an individual or through group work.

> *IA: Kids can learn most from each other, not from the teacher* (IA, personal communication, June 13, 2014).

Figures 2 and 3 show examples of student writing from the Honduran bilingual school where IA teaches. The student is a 3rd grader in the program. His work illustrates the success the program has had in English instruction for native Spanish-speaking students. The student's writing shows his understanding of phonics and letter sounds in the English language. Figure 2 shows a reflection about a book written in a student journal. It provides evidence of the student's ability to read and comprehend in English and apply English language skills to share his ideas on paper.

Figure 2

Writing Sample from 3rd Grade Student in Honduran Bilingual Elementary School

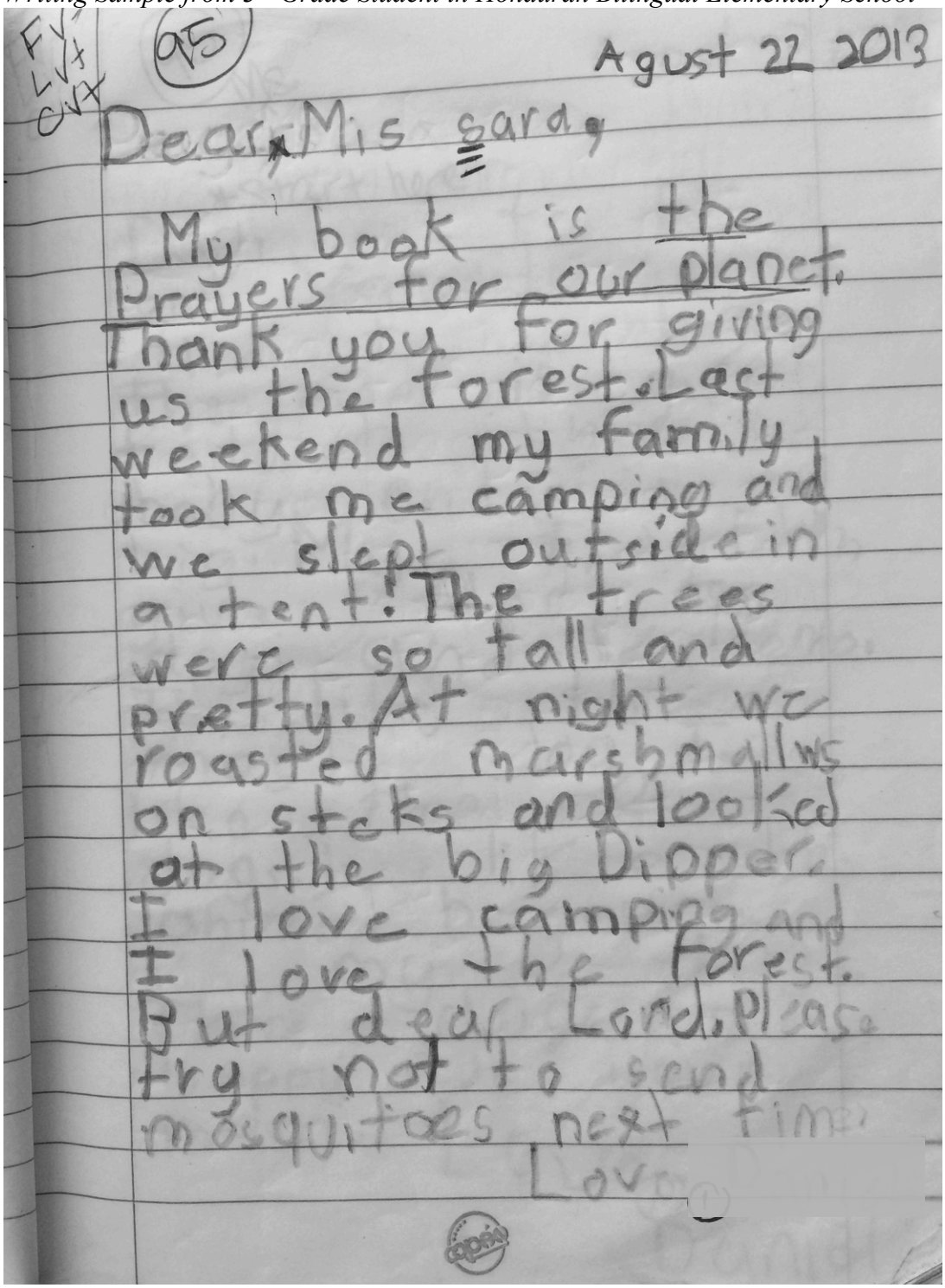
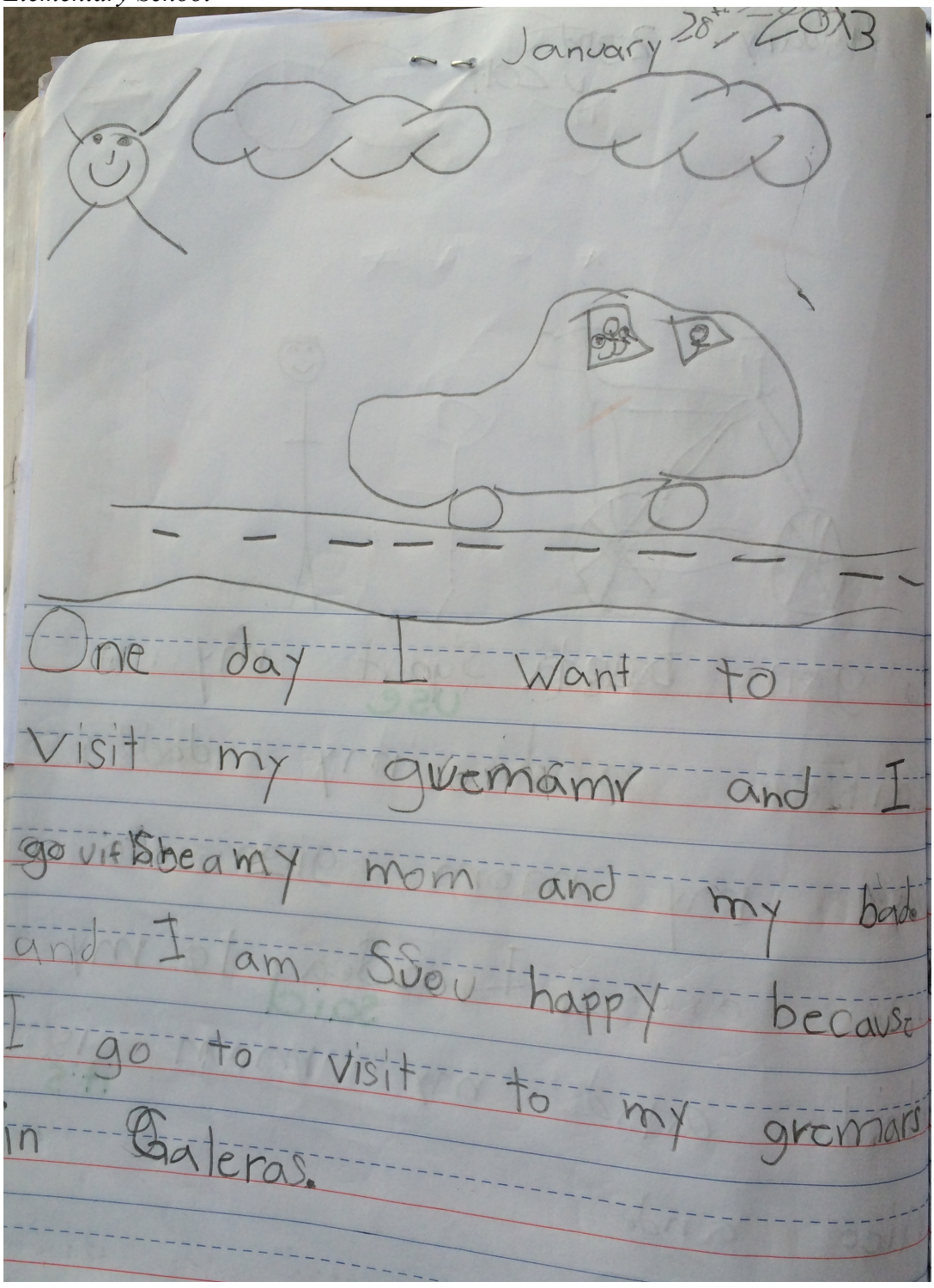


Figure 3

Writing Sample and Illustration from 3rd Grade Student in Honduran Bilingual Elementary School



Similarly, IB elaborated on the idea of using peer interaction to promote language acquisition. IB suggested setting students up with language buddies. A student with high English language skills may work with a lower performing student to act as the students' personal teacher, using real life situations and interaction. IB emphasized the benefits of small group and one on one instruction. She said it allows the teacher to understand what the student is struggling with. It also lets the students practice speaking as they respond to certain questions and prompts. IB believes that the best form of instruction is small group instruction. For example, she suggested working with a group of three students so the students and teacher can converse with each other. She also suggested putting students in groups of 5 to 7 to work together.

> *IB: A greater success rate will be seen with smaller groups of students* (IB, personal communication, December 17, 2013).

IB said small group instruction is best for students who may be intimidated to speak with adults and would benefit from talking with other students their own age. However, IB believes that small group instruction is beneficial for all students because of the conversation it facilitates.

During whole group instructional times, IB suggested applying techniques that allow students to be hands on and engaged in the lessons. By making connections with mental images and tangible objects, this style keeps students interested and motivated to learn. According to Cummins' (2000) language framework, this type of instruction would be operating in Quadrant B, context embedded and cognitively demanding communication (as cited in Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004). Students practicing conversation in Quadrant B will ideally transition to Quadrant D for optimal language acquisition (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004). IB's experience shows the importance of

providing students with highly contextual activities that they can relate to. In Honduras, IB did not have many textbooks or materials to aid in instruction. She had one English textbook that had a teacher manual and workbooks that accompanied the material. To supplement instruction, she made up games and songs, told stories and acted them out, and used token economies to promote motivation.

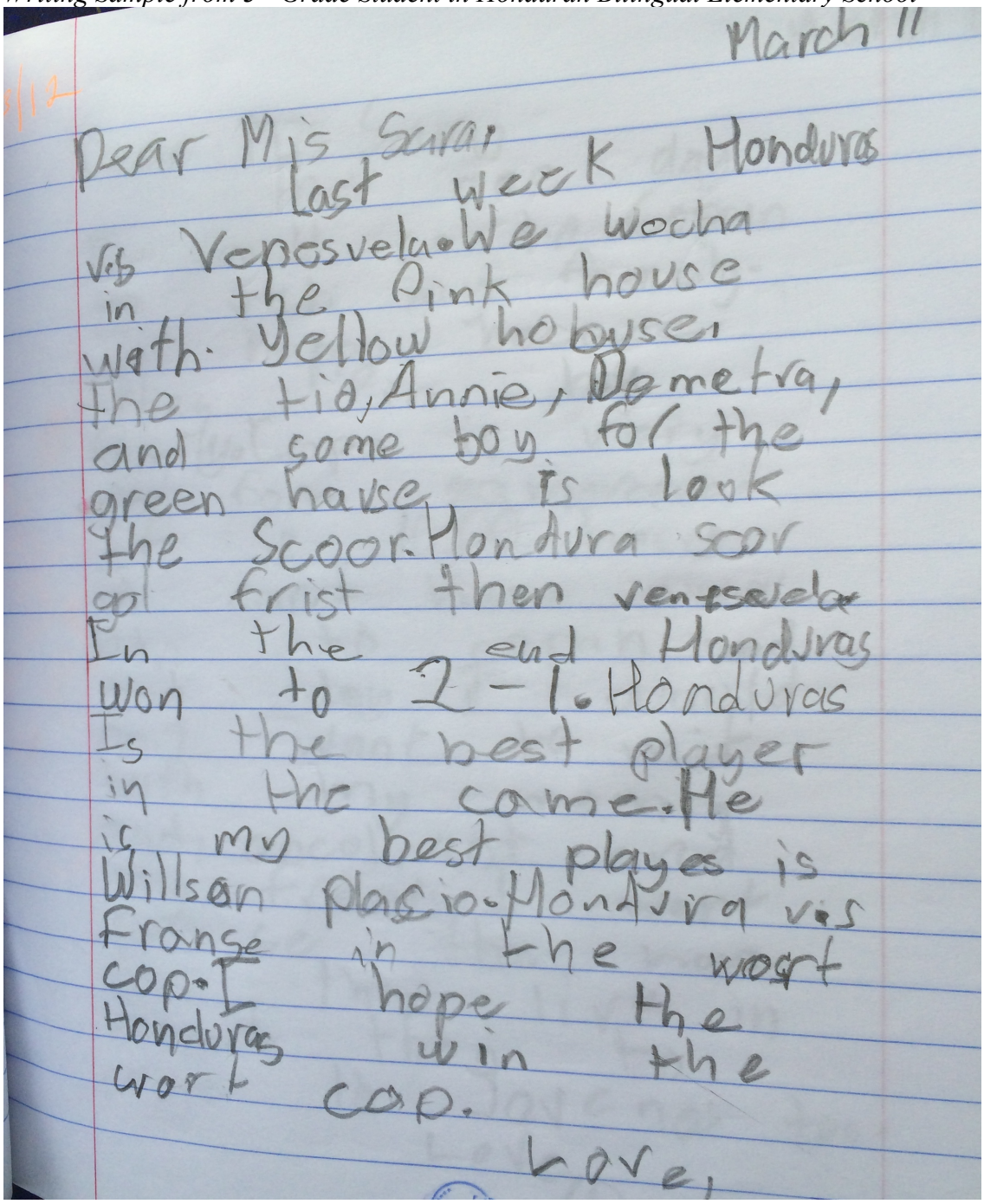
As with IA, IC teaches reading through small group differentiated reading groups. The leveled reading groups allow for the teacher to work in small groups with students on specific reading skills that the students may need to work on. The model allows for highly differentiated instruction for individual students. When resources are available, books that vary by skill level are given to the students to practice reading at home. This form of instruction is effective in targeting and teaching specific reading skills for students. In a Latin American bilingual school, the technique helps students become fluent readers in English.

Furthermore, IC suggests incorporating explicit grammar instruction everyday. Because English grammar can be complex for a native Spanish-speaker, it is important for students to practice English grammar skills. Similarly to IB, IC encouraged teaching everything in context. She suggested keeping students interested and motivated by providing contextual examples that make sense to the students. IC also provided opportunities for students to practice English in cognitively demanding and context embedded activities. Following Cummins' (2000) framework, the students will eventually transition to Quadrant D, cognitively demanding and context reduced conversation (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004). Figure 4 shows a writing sample from a Honduran bilingual student who chose to write about the World Cup. His writing sample

illustrates the importance of providing students with contextual examples that are important to them.

Figure 4

Writing Sample from 3rd Grade Student in Honduran Bilingual Elementary School



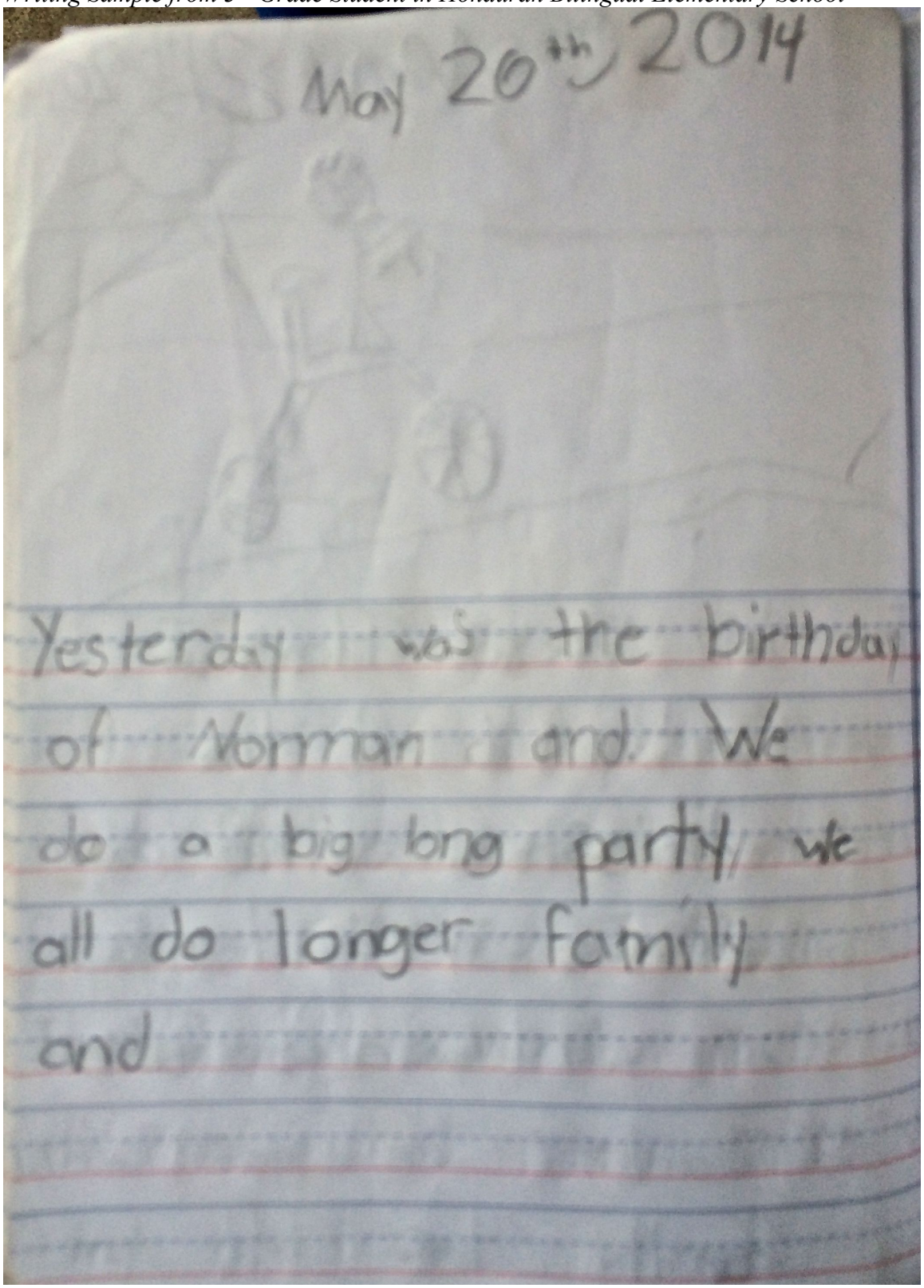
ID echoed the previous interviewees' statements. He discussed the importance of practicing conversation in the classroom, even if explicit, lecture-based lessons are also used. His advice follows García and Kleifgen's (2010) suggestion that teachers should promote complex language use by using explicit and overt instruction (García & Kleifgen, 2010). He suggested using partners and small groups for conversation and to keep students engaged and motivated. ID shared that teachers who have knowledge of both the English and Spanish languages may greatly benefit ELL students in the classroom. He discussed the difference in word formation and sentence structure in English and Spanish.

> *ID: Everything in Spanish is totally phonetic. But sentence structure is different* (ID, personal communication, February 24, 2015).

Figure 5 shows an example of a student's writing in English with a Spanish sentence structure. ID shared that a teacher with understanding of both languages would be able to work with students to effectively explain the misunderstanding.

Figure 5

Writing Sample from 3rd Grade Student in Honduran Bilingual Elementary School



ID also discussed the importance of building strong student-student and teacher-student relationships in the classroom. He spoke about the importance of promoting a safe classroom environment for language learning. When students get discouraged, they may be timid to speak. If a student feels like the classroom environment is not safe, he or she might not want to speak and consequently will not be engaged in the lesson.

> *ID: It is emotionally risky to speak a new language. Mistakes are going to happen. It might be embarrassing, but you have to try* (ID, personal communication, February 24, 2015).

He seeks to create a classroom where when students make mistakes, it is acceptable to laugh and to try again. A safe and accepting classroom environment will promote an environment conducive to language acquisition.

Interestingly, many of the classroom instructional methods will also be found in elementary schools in the United States. Many of these instructional techniques are current research-based methods of instruction and published in resources made available for educators (Baker et al., 2014). Many teachers in Latin American bilingual schools are from or have been educated in the United States and may have knowledge of literature that suggests these styles of instruction. Therefore, the main difference in the programs is not the general classroom instructional techniques, but the amount of Spanish the students are hearing over the course of their day. To more closely simulate English education in Latin America, ESL programs in the United States should attempt to incorporate more Spanish instruction for the Spanish-speaking students in the classroom.

Impact of Culture

Another theme that appeared in the interviews is the impact that culture has on students in the classroom. IA compared the difference in the culture of children in Latin

America and the culture of children in the United States. In Latin America, it is the general culture of a community for all children to play and interact outside together. In many communities, the students even walk to school and walk home allowing time for socialization and communication before and after school.

> *IA: Kids here are outside and social. They are not sitting in front of a TV or playing games. Kids are on computers in the states, not playing outside as much. They are less social* (IA, personal communication, June 13, 2014).

While many American children play outside and interact with neighborhood friends, many do not. Children spend a lot of time indoors, playing with video games and computers, doing homework, and spending time with their families. Many American students ride a bus to and from school and schools are not always in the middle of neighborhoods where the majority of students are able to walk to school. While this is a generalization about the modern habits of American children, it is a clear cultural difference. IA went on to share about the impact she believes cultural differences have on Spanish-speaking students in the United States:

> *IA: The way the kids dress, what the kids have when they come to school, the way the school looks- these things are all different, it overwhelms new students* (IA, personal communication, June 13, 2014).

For language development and acquisition, it is essential for students to converse and socialize. For monolingual children, socialization is important just like it is for any child. However for developmental bilingual students, socialization is crucial. Latin American students who are learning English in school still socialize in Spanish outside of school. Spanish-speaking students in the United States are placed into a mostly English environment in which they cannot communicate. These students have trouble

communicating with other students in school. It would be beneficial for them to have more time to socialize with English speakers outside of the classroom. IB affirms the previous comment on socialization by discussing the importance of conversation.

> *IB: Practicing conversation is essential* (IB, personal communication, December 17, 2013).

In regards to the Colombian culture, IC elaborates on the impact that a social and interactive culture has on her students:

> *IC: I would say [the culture here] is a very people-oriented culture in which people truly spend time with one another, therefore I think [students] might feel less stress or worry about messing up grammatically when talking in English* (IC, personal communication, December 28, 2014).

IC believes that the social aspect of the culture makes the students feel more comfortable participating and interacting in class. Like ID shared, "it is emotionally risky to speak a new language." The students may feel intimidated or nervous to speak a new language in the classroom; however, a communicative and social culture might reduce the occurrence of these feelings for students.

Research shows that culture shock impacts children in an academic setting (Godwin, 2009). Latin American students in their native countries do not have the negative affects of culture while they are learning English. Spanish-speaking students in the United States are adjusting to a new school and community culture while trying to learn English. They may be overwhelmed in the classroom because they cannot communicate well and they do not have as many chances to use their native language in and outside of school. Similar to culture shock, this is the concept that Miller and Endo (2004) labeled "language shock" (Miller & Endo, 2004).

The difference in culture makes an interesting impact on English education programs in Latin America and in the United States. Programs in Latin America do not have to take culture and language shock into consideration for instruction. Comparatively, schools in the United States need to consider the impact of culture shock when choosing how to best educate Spanish-speaking students.

Applications and Conclusions

This paper has presented research and subsequent analysis pertaining to English language instruction techniques for Spanish-speaking students. In Part I a literature review of modern research provided information about ESL programs and their effectiveness. Part II compiled research relating to culture shock and its potential effect on Spanish-speaking students in the United States. Finally, Part III shows common themes that appeared through interviews I conducted with educators in Latin American bilingual schools.

What is happening in Latin American English Language programs is more complex than it appears. While most classroom instruction is in English, the students are able to use Spanish in all other aspects of their lives. Most will speak Spanish with their families at home. Students use Spanish when they converse outside of the classroom, during extracurricular activities, at recess, and before and after school. They also use Spanish in the greater communities in which they live. Students are learning English in school but simultaneously using their native Spanish language throughout the day. This factor plays a major role in the students' language acquisition.

My first encounter with this phenomenon happened during my time as an intern at an orphanage in Zamorano, Honduras. I worked with six boys who attend a local

bilingual elementary school. I noticed the boys' proficient English skills despite not being able to use English outside of the classroom. I served as the boys' tutor during their summer break to work on the English skills that they had developed during their years at the bilingual school. I was able to look at samples of their writing, work with them on their math skills, read with them, and listen to them read daily. Finally, I was able to hear them speak and practice the language skills they had developed through conversation. My observations of these students guided the emphasis of this study and influenced the questions I chose to ask during the interviews I conducted. I also connected several experiences I have had during my time studying elementary education at the college level. I have come into contact with several ELL students during my student teaching placement and observed their experience in schools in the United States.

The research is clear in regards to what works for language acquisition in children. The findings from the interviews suggest that Latin American bilingual schools may be the most effective setting for students to learn English, according to research. However, this information applies to a small population of students and does not affect the Spanish-speaking population already living in the United States. These students are enrolled in American schools, most with English speaking teachers and fellow classmates.

The application of this study is this: How can educators take what research shows works for language acquisition, as well as the model of Latin American English programs and apply it to their classrooms in America?

Bilingualism

Spanish-speaking children in Latin American bilingual schools develop both English and Spanish language skills; they are not being forced to learn English in a school setting that is unfamiliar to them. As Thomas and Collier (2002) write, "the strongest predictor of English language achievement was the amount of formal schooling the students received in the home language" (as cited in García & Kleifgen, 2010, p. 48). While Spanish may not be incorporated in the daily classroom instruction, the students are still able to use their native languages throughout the day. These Latin American students have the advantage of developing their bilingual language skills. They use Spanish to communicate while also learning and practicing their new English skills in the classroom because they live in a country where they speak the native language. The Honduran students I worked with were able to transition easily from speaking Spanish with their friends, to speaking English with me. They read everyday in both Spanish and English during our tutoring time. I was able to see how the boys move between the two languages and apply their emerging bilingual abilities.

This process of language acquisition follows Palmer and Martínez's (2013) theory of dynamic bilingualism. Instead of considering language as a "bounded system of communication," it is more of a practice and a social and cultural construct that influences a person (Palmer & Martínez, 2013, p. 276). In dynamic bilingualism, students are prepared to interact in multilingual environments. It is a hybrid approach to language acquisition in which individuals develop two languages simultaneously and are able to communicate in both, and move between languages easily. As IA confirmed,

> *IA: The more slowly [English] is introduced to them,* ***in addition to their native language****, the more successful they can be. Children should not be thrown in cold to learn a new language. They also need to develop their native language. They*

> *will not be motivated if they are thrown in cold* (IA, personal communication, June 13, 2014).

Promoting native language use. Teachers should encourage students' bilingualism rather than focus on English acquisition. Research shows the cognitive benefits of that bilingualism or multilingualism has on a person (Palmer & Martínez, 2013). Spanish-speaking students in schools in the United States have access to these benefits as they learn English. If teachers solely focus on teaching these students English, they may not view their native language as an advantage or as something that has potential to benefit them. Students may even feel ashamed or embarrassed about their native language. Teachers should encourage students to continue to speak Spanish. If the teacher knows words or phrases in Spanish, it may put the child at ease to hear their teacher speak in their own language. Teachers should encourage other students to practice Spanish with the native speaker. Because bilingualism has cognitive benefits, having a Spanish-speaking student in the classroom has the potential to positively impact the entire class. The student may help teach their classmates words and phrases in Spanish. This may spark an interest in other students to learn Spanish or learn any other language. This practice will also help promote a safe and comfortable classroom environment for all students.

I worked with a Spanish-speaking ELL student during my student teaching placement in college. To apply this technique with this student and my class, I began teaching the days of the week and the date in Spanish. This was a simple way to allow the student to hear Spanish during the school day and to help the English-speaking students learn words in another language. Another simple application could be to sing

songs or show videos in Spanish. Simple songs such as "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" in Spanish ("Cabeza, hombros, rodillas, y pies") are a great way to incorporate Spanish during the school day.

Preservice teachers. One way to help promote bilingualism for students is to educate preservice teachers on the topic of bilingualism as well as require prerequisite language requirements in the curriculum. With the rise of international students in elementary schools in the United States, educators must understand effective techniques for instructing ELL students.

Following the evidence from research, a fluent English and Spanish teacher is the most ideal situation for a classroom that has Spanish-speaking students. However, bilingual teachers are not especially common throughout the United States. With that said, even the slightest knowledge of another language may positively benefit a student. Spanish-speaking students in the United States will benefit greatly from a teacher who can say words, phrases, and short sentences in Spanish. ELL students speak all kinds of different languages in elementary schools in the United States, but Spanish is the most common and the most quickly growing (NCES, 2014). Therefore, teachers who know Spanish will have the ability to significantly impact the education of many ELL students over the course of their career.

Bilingual teachers are ideal for effective English language instruction because of their ability to move between two languages easily and to speak a student's native language in the classroom. Bilingual teachers also have the added ability to understand the difference in the sentence structure and grammar of another language. ID shared his belief on the importance of teachers who know some amount of another language:

> *ID: Bilingual teachers can effectively compare one language to another. They have the ability to understand how things get confused easily* (ID, personal communication, February 24, 2015).

There are elements of the English language that are difficult to understand and do not follow consistent rules. Similarly, the Spanish language has many irregular verbs and phrases and it follows a different sentence structure from English. Sentences do not always translate well from English to Spanish or Spanish to English. The Honduran boys I worked with often combined the English language with Spanish grammar. For example, they used adjectives after the nouns they were describing or would use possessive adjectives following a noun to explain possession for example, "the house of him." A teacher who has knowledge of both English and Spanish has the ability to assist a student in understanding the differences in grammar as he or she is learning English.

A simple change in curriculum requirements for preservice teachers in higher education can accomplish this goal. Teachers should be required to take a several years of another language, not necessarily Spanish. Even basic instruction of a foreign language at the college level may greatly impact a preservice teacher's future students. A teacher with dual language knowledge will not only help international students, but also all students in the classroom as the teacher can promote bilingualism and cultural awareness. This ability may also allow teachers to be able to communicate with the parents of their ELL student, depending on the language the student speaks. The more teachers that have knowledge of another language, the more culturally inclusive classrooms and schools there will be.

For example, during my student teaching placement a student in a classroom across the hall from mine had moved to the United States from Japan halfway through the

school year. The student was showing many symptoms of culture shock and came to school day after day in tears. I could not help but think about the impact a teacher with knowledge of several words in Japanese would have on her life. I wished that I knew words or phrases in Japanese to make her feel more at home and more comfortable her new environment. Changes in the curriculum for preservice teachers may produce teachers who choose to take Japanese at the college level for several years. A teacher with these language skills could have helped reduce the symptoms of culture shock for the student as well as provide a more conducive environment for language acquisition.

Professional development. Finally, more programs should be available for educators who are already in the field. These programs should train teachers in ways to incorporate successful instructional techniques for ELL students in their classrooms. They should instruct teachers in the cognitive process of language acquisition and research based methods of English instruction. Additionally, the programs should address culture shock and its impact on students.

Current teachers may not be aware of the way that culture shock impacts their students academically. They may be able to counteract some of the side effects of culture shock if they have more knowledge of the research in the field. Finally, the programs should provide resources such as articles presenting research on the topic, books in multiple languages, and dual language multimedia resources for these teachers who may have English language learners in their classrooms.

Classroom Instruction

Time spent using Spanish and English during the day will impact the language acquisition of a Spanish-speaking student. Another important piece of general classroom

education is what types of instruction methodology the teacher chooses to use. The type of instruction and activities will not only impact the ELL students but also all students in the classroom. While there are research-based practices that educators often apply in their classrooms, there also may be several methods that are especially beneficial for the ELL students in a classroom.

Hands-on learning. All interviewees discussed the importance of hands-on and interactive learning that incorporates highly contextual situations. Planning activities that keep the students interested and engaged will help develop their language skills as well as their general education. This type of interaction is what Cummins (2000) referred to as context-embedded communication. The context-embedded interaction should help the students make sense of day-to-day interactions and classroom activities so that they can move to more cognitively demanding situations with ease. Learning in a context-embedded activity may help a student transition into being able to learn in a context-reduced lesson (Cummins, 2000).

Reading and writing instruction. Interviewees also mentioned the importance of reading and writing in the classroom. Reading helps students practice their language skills and increase their vocabulary knowledge. Writing helps students show what language skills they have achieved and apply what they have learned. Latin American English teachers seem to emphasize reading in English. For educators in the United States, this practice is even more accessible because the books that are available in the classroom or library will be in English. Ideally, students should be reading in English everyday in the classroom, even if the student is just looking at the words or pictures.

Language buddies. When international students do join a class, following IB's suggestion and Mary Borba's (2009) research, I believe it is a good practice to set the child up with a language buddy. Choose a student in the class to work with the English language learner. The student can model appropriate classroom and hallway behavior. He or she may guide their language buddy through the lunch line or in other extracurricular activities. I believe the practice will help a new ELL student feel more comfortable and accepted in the new classroom environment. It will also prevent other students from unintentionally making the student feel embarrassed because of how they interact and communicate. It will also help orchestrate conversations that will build vocabulary knowledge for the ELL student. The Spanish-speaking student will gain vocabulary from speaking and communicating with their language buddy which may diminish the language shock he or she is experiencing. Finally, it will hopefully produce a friendship between the students

Impact of Culture

English language learners will experience some level of culture shock in the school setting that may impact the process of language acquisition (Godwin 2009; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Compared to students in the United States, students in Latin American bilingual schools are learning English without the negative effects of having moved into a new culture and therefore do not experience symptoms of culture shock. (With that said, teachers should be aware of students who may experience symptoms of culture shock for other reasons such as moving from a different state or country. Moving to any kind of new setting can impact students academically and taking appropriate steps to minimize these effects will greatly benefit students.) There are

measures that classrooms teachers can take to attempt to reduce the negative impact of culture shock for students.

Culturally inclusive classrooms. Teachers can work to create a culturally accepting and inclusive classroom. In the modern interconnected world, countries interact and communicate more than ever. This should encourage teachers to incorporate other cultures into their lessons. Students should understand that there are ways of life that differ from the American culture. They should understand their location on a map relative to other continents and countries. The more knowledge children have about other ways of life and cultures, the more accepting they will be to a fellow student who comes from a different culture. When students learn about other countries, they may be curious to know more about other cultures and languages that exist.

Utilization of resources. Teachers may incorporate culture by using literature and showing videos from other cultures. They can open up classroom discussions about what it would be like to live in a different country. If there are international students in the classroom, teachers should use the students as a resource to share about their home and culture. They may even ask the student's parents to come in a share about their unique background and culture. The teacher may also contact other community members and leaders who are associated with others cultures to come share with the students about their home country. Food from another country might be an interesting topic to discuss and to compare with the food in the United States. If a parent is willing, he or she may be able to cook a unique food and share it with the class to help show aspects from their native country. If a teacher encourages the student to share about his or her culture, he or

she will feel more accepted and comfortable in the classroom. This technique will also help to reduce negative effects of culture shock that may impact the student.

Conclusion

It is my belief that schools that have teachers with this knowledge and skill will provide more effective instruction to English language learners. They will offer classrooms that promote bilingualism, cultural acceptance, and world knowledge. They will be important liaisons between schools and parents. They will be role models for students who can see that bilingualism is a noble goal to have in their lives. These teachers will be a part of schools where students of all cultures and backgrounds feel accepted and loved. These schools will become a vital part of the community. They will be schools that international *and* local parents want to send their children to and to be a part of. These will be the schools that provide the most modern and cognitively advantageous education for all children. If this paper has accomplished its goal it will be a starting place for educators and administrators to gain knowledge and understanding about English language learners and how to most effectively teach these students English.

Implications for Future Research

The qualitative results from the interviews influencing the conclusions for this study could be added to extensively. There are many bilingual schools in Latin America with teachers from the United States and all across the world that may have insight and suggestions for how English language learners learn and acquire English, specifically Spanish-speaking students. As the number of Spanish speakers are growing, these suggestions will be crucial for teachers in the United States to improve and learn more

about second language acquisition. This information may help mold programs that train teachers about English language instruction.

Secondly, quantitative information may be able to be obtained from bilingual schools. A study about the speed and accuracy of English language skill acquisition could be done to compare students learning English in Latin America and Spanish-speaking students in the United States. Developing effective assessment materials is difficult, especially when two languages are involved. However, an English assessment for English language learners both in Latin America and the United States may supply important quantitative results that would supplement the results of this study.

Finally, Spanish-speaking students are by no means the only population of students who are learning English in schools in the United States. Hundreds of countries and languages are represented in schools all across the country (NCES, 2014). Therefore, this research could be extended into other countries, languages, and cultures and would impact the education of future English language learners in the American school system.

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